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## Platonism and The Expository Treatise on the Soul (NHC II,6)

Roig Lanzillotta, Lautaro

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***GODS, DAIMONES, RITUALS, MYTHS  
AND HISTORY OF RELIGIONS IN PLUTARCH'S WORKS***

***STUDIES DEVOTED TO PROFESSOR FREDERICK E. BRENK***

***By***

***THE INTERNATIONAL PLUTARCH SOCIETY***

***edited by***

**LUC VAN DER STOCKT, FRANCES TITCHENER**

**HEINZ GERD INGENKAMP & AURELIO PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ**



**UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA  
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**

**THE INTERNATIONAL  
PLUTARCH SOCIETY**

LUC VAN DER STOCKT, FRANCES TITCHENER,  
HEINZ GERD INGENKAMP & AURELIO PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ  
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Ἐφορῶσι δὲ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτῆς σελήνης  
τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὴν φύσιν

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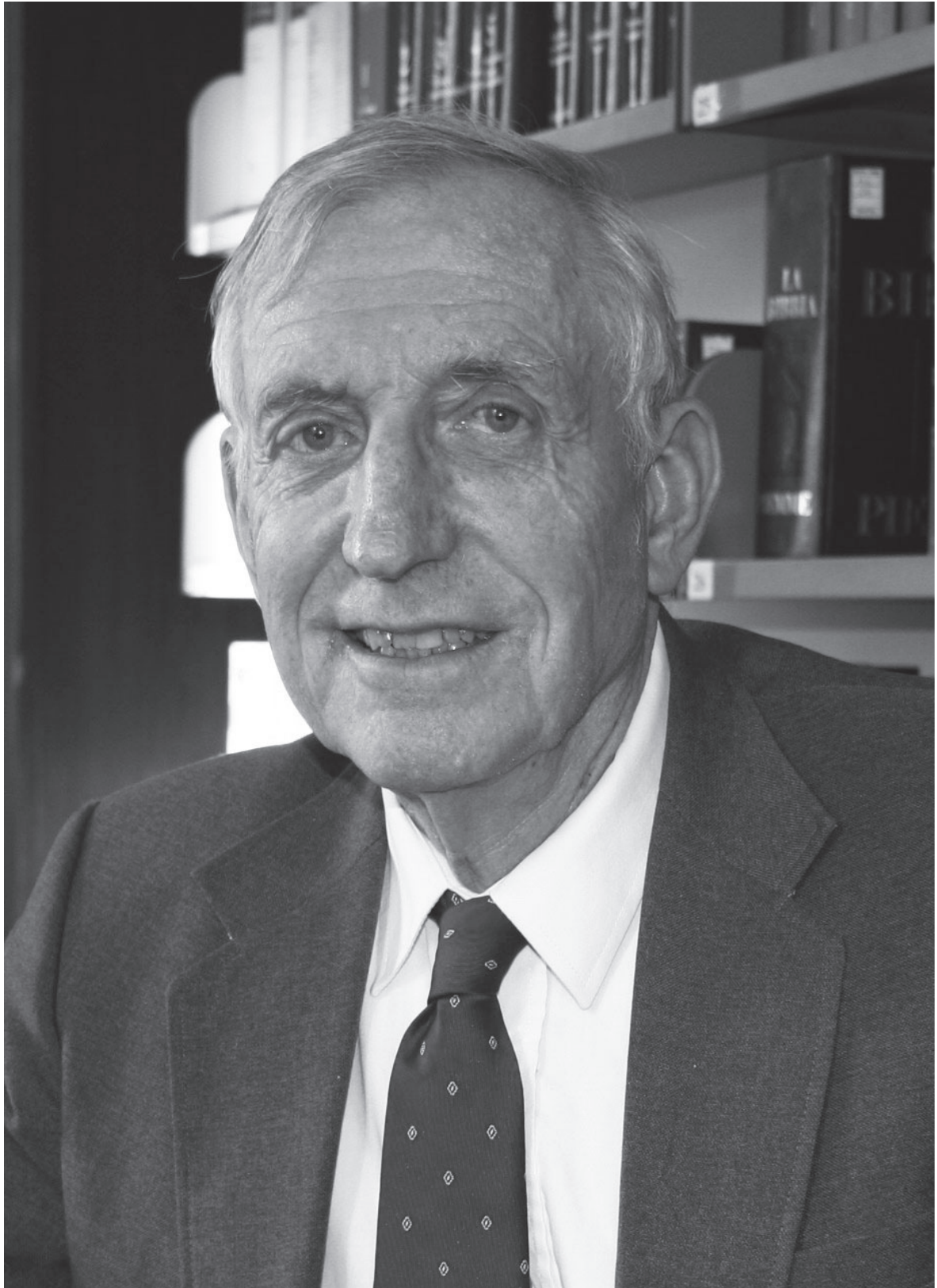
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**FREDERICK E. BRENK**

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PLATONISM AND *THE EXPOSITORY TREATISE ON THE SOUL* (NHC II,6)

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It is no novelty to declare that a text from classical or Late Antiquity is influenced by Plato. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in a much repeated quote from his Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh, the philosopher Alfred Whitehead affirmed that ‘the safest characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato’<sup>1</sup>.

Greek philosophical influence has also been frequently acknowledged in the specific context of Gnosticism. Tertullian makes reference to this influence at the beginning of the third century while criticizing his heterodox adversaries in *De anima* (23.1-5). With a *hapax legomenon*, namely *condimentarium*, he calls Plato the ‘caterer to all the heretics’, thus critically pointing to the influence of the philosopher of the Academy on Gnostic teachers such as Apelles or Valentinus<sup>2</sup>. Also in the third century, Hippolytus traced Basilides’ thought back to Aristotle. After describing the philosopher’s views on god, the soul and the fifth element (*quinta essentia*) as ‘obscure and incomprehensible’, he explains Basilides’ thought through Aristotle, as if it is thanks to Basilides (*obscurum per obscurius*) that Hippolytus finally came to understand Aristotle<sup>3</sup>.

However, such alleged influences often have more to do with the expectations of readers than with the texts themselves. To begin with, the relationships a reader establishes between texts are highly dependent on his own background and what he knows or reads determines what he recognizes in other texts. The influences are therefore never necessary and often subjective, and another reader might not recognize

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<sup>1</sup> A. WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality* (New York, 1957 [1929]) 53.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *De anima* 23.5, *Doleo bona fide Platonem omnium hareticorum condimentarium factum*.

<sup>3</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VII, 15ff. See A.P. Bos, ‘Basilides: An Aristotelian Gnostic’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000) 44–60.

them. One may also be simply dealing with the fortuitous appearance or the unintentional use of a given motif.

However, even when its use and intention is clearly established, the appearance of a given motif is not enough to surmise the influence of a given author, text or thinker on another text. In order to do so, the motif or theme should manifest itself within a clear conceptual framework that coincides with the general world-view of the alleged influence, and if this is not the case we should at least be able to explain why this is so.

This is especially applicable to cases of alleged Platonic influences in Late Antiquity, a period in which Platonism had already become a kind of intellectual koine that extended its dominion far beyond the specific sphere of philosophical schools. In fact, the Platonic approach to reality was ubiquitous and had reached a much wider public than was originally intended. For example, the soul-body distinction and the view of the later as a garment for the former, the opposition of the spiritual and the material and the higher valuation of the intangible, the notion of an inner being that is different from an external material one, the distinction between the heavenly and earthly realms, and many other elements appear everywhere: sometimes they are incorporated into the world-view of other philosophical schools and at other times they appear in literary works or are integrated into more or less popular religious texts of the period.

The caveats summarized above should therefore be taken into account before surmising alleged influences on a text or before evaluating its tenor or the orientation of its thought. The widespread appearance of Platonic motifs in Late Antiquity, for example, may sometimes be deceptive, leading us to conclude that there is a Platonic influence when in fact there is simply an echo of isolated motifs proceeding from the wider intellectual atmosphere in which the given text was composed. Where these motifs proceed from a more systematic influence, however, we should be able to place them in the broader world-view of the text.

I would like to exemplify this through the analysis of a Nag Hammadi text, *The Expository Treatise on the Soul* (*ExSoul*), a text which scholars generally label as Platonic. As we will see, in spite of its undeniable Platonic character, the text presents conceptual peculiarities that we must be able to explain before classing it as Platonic. The exposition is organized into three sections. The first provides an analysis of *ExSoul* with a view to assessing the Platonic nature of the text. The second focuses on *ExSoul*'s allegorical interpretation of Gen 12:1, which is compared with Philo of Alexandria's treatment of the same passage, revealing a rather different cosmological and anthropological background. Where do these differences come from? Given their divergences, can both texts still be considered Platonic? The third section offers some conclusions based on the previous analysis.

### 1. The Platonism of *The Expository Treatise on the Soul*

*The Expository Treatise on the Soul* is the sixth tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex 2<sup>4</sup> in which we find a description both of the soul's nature and origin and of its fate in the world of nature. *ExSoul* not only describes her fall into materiality (κάθοδος)<sup>5</sup>, it also indicates the manner in which she may recover her pristine condition (ἀνάβασις).<sup>6</sup> Probably composed in Greek around 200 AD, the text presents a very negative view of the physical body and the world and, consequently, includes an exhortation to other-worldliness, introducing frequent quotations from the OT and Homer<sup>7</sup>.

The Soul's Sojourn in the World and Eventual Liberation from the Bonds of Nature.

As the text begins, the soul appears to be lost in the world of nature. However, *ExSoul* is not entirely consistent regarding the causes that determined this exile on earth. The opening, for example, presents the soul as a victim, affirming that when she 'fell down into a body and came to this life then she fell into the hands of many robbers'<sup>8</sup>. Even if this and other passages seem to imply that the soul is not responsible for her present condition<sup>9</sup>, other sections seem to make her liable for her own fate<sup>10</sup>. Thus, for example, it is asserted that 'many are the afflictions that have come

<sup>4</sup> There are numerous interesting commentaries and articles. See for example, W.C. ROBINSON, 'The Exegesis on the Soul', *NT* 12 (1970) 102–17; G.W. MACRAE, 'A Nag Hammadi Treatise on the Soul', in *Ex orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren oblata* (Leiden, 1972) 471–79; J.-E. MÉNARD, 'L'Evangile selon Philippe et l'Exégèse de l'âme', in id. (ed.), *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: colloque du Centre d'histoire des religions, Strasbourg, 23–25 octobre 1974* (Leiden, 1975) 56–81; H. BETHGE, 'Die Exegese über die Seele ... eingeleitet und übersetzt vom Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 101 (1976) 93–104.

<sup>5</sup> On the soul's feminine nature see below section 1.2.

<sup>6</sup> C. COLPE, 'Die "Himmelsreise der Seele" ausserhalb und innerhalb der gnosis', in U. BIANCHI (ed.), *Le origini dello gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina 13–18 aprile 1966* (Leiden, 1967) 429–447; J. HELDERMAN, 'Anachorese zum Heil', in MARTIN KRAUSE (ed.), *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib* (Leiden, 1975) 40–55.

<sup>7</sup> On the use of quotations in *ExSoul*, see P. NAGEL, 'Die Septuaginta-Zitate der koptisch-gnostischen "Exegese über die Seele" (Nag Hammadi Codex II)', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 22/23 (1974) 249–69; R. McL. WILSON, 'Old Testament Exegesis in the Gnostic Exegesis on the Soul', in MARTIN KRAUSE (ed.), *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, 217–24; M. SCOPELLO, 'Les "Testimonia" dans le traité de "L'exégèse de l'âme (Nag Hammadi, II, 6)"', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 191 (1977) 159–71; ID., 'Las citations d'Homère dans le Traité de L'Exégèse de l'âme', in M. KRAUSE, *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977) 3–12.

<sup>8</sup> *ExSoul* 127,25–26.

<sup>9</sup> *ExSoul* 127,22–128,1; 132,20.

<sup>10</sup> *ExSoul* 128,35–129,5; 137,5.

upon her because she *abandoned* her house'<sup>11</sup>.

Admittedly, this lack of clarity is not surprising: ambiguity and contradictions are not uncommon in writers of this period when dealing with the *descensus animae*, the anthropological problem par excellence in Late Antiquity<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, if the soul was originally divine, how can we explain the fact that it now lives a degraded life in the realm of change, subject to defilement at 'the hands of many robbers' – to use the expression in *ExSoul*?<sup>13</sup> In spite of the ambiguity concerning the causes that produced the fall, *ExSoul* is clear as to the very negative view both of the world and of the physical body. The text is explicit in its description of the soul's suffering and exile in her earthly sojourn and in encouraging people to leave behind an existence depicted as a defilement and/or equivalent to prostitution.

The lack of clarity disappears when we come to the ascent of the soul<sup>14</sup>. It consists of three clear steps: the soul's rejection of all that is not hers, namely the sorceries of the external world, repentance for her former deeds, and reunion with her real husband. While the first two steps proceed from her own will and determination, the last depends exclusively on the Father's external intervention. Only then does the soul regain its original condition.

#### Nature of the Soul

In explaining the soul's present condition, the text remarks on the feminine name and nature of the soul. It is noteworthy that *ExSoul* even asserts that the soul has a womb<sup>15</sup>. This reference is essential for the conceptual and literary framework of the text, since the focus of the treatise is both the soul's capacity to conceive and the fact that this capacity can result in either good or bad offspring according to the partners with whom she unites<sup>16</sup>. The idea is of Platonic provenance and seems to be inspired by Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*<sup>17</sup>. Support for this hypothesis comes from

<sup>11</sup> *ExSoul* 129,4–5.

<sup>12</sup> A.J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Doctrines de l'âme* (Paris, 1953) 63–118. See also J. DILLON, 'The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory', in B. LAYTON (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1980) 357–64.

<sup>13</sup> *ExSoul* 127,25–26.

<sup>14</sup> *ExSoul* 134,14–15.

<sup>15</sup> *ExSoul* 127,19–22. On the motif, see A.A. BARB, 'Diva Matrix. A Faked Intaglio in the Possession of P.P. Rubens and the Iconology of the Symbol', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 16 (1953) 193–214.

<sup>16</sup> *ExSoul* 134,2–3, good offspring; 128,23–26, bad offspring.

<sup>17</sup> In spite of A.D. NOCK and A.J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Corpus Hermeticum I: Traités I–XII* (Paris, 1960) 101, note 9, who consider the idea of the soul's good or bad offspring to be a combination of Oriental and Platonic elements, we agree with B. Layton that it is clearly Platonic and that it can be explained on

the text's assertion, later on, that the soul's womb is 'around the outside like the male genitalia, which are external',<sup>18</sup> which recalls Aristophanes' speech in the same Platonic dialogue that describes Zeus' division of the originally androgynous humans into two halves as a punishment for human pride<sup>19</sup>.

*ExSoul* relates that although virgin and androgynous in origin<sup>20</sup>, the soul lost this pristine condition as a result of incarnation, when 'some made use of her [by force], while others did so by seducing her with a gift'<sup>21</sup>. How should we explain this statement? According to some scholars it is a reference to sexuality as 'the soul's plight'<sup>22</sup>. In their view, the sexual metaphor is not a metaphor at all, but a description of the actual state of the soul within a body and its consequent promiscuity. In my view, however, the context makes this interpretation hardly tenable, since we are still moving exclusively in the sphere of the soul: to this point there is no reference to the body at all. How could the text refer to sexuality? The text cannot be describing the latter's prostitution but something else.

#### The 'Prostitution' of the Soul

Given that we are still in the context of the soul, in spite of the sexual imagery the simile of the prostitution of the soul should be seen as a metaphorical description of her interaction with the sensible world. There are both irrational and rational elements involved in this exchange: those who 'made use of her by force' refers to the senses and sensory perception. The simile is effective – due to the soul's union with the body, the continuous influx of information conveyed by the senses creates a delusionary conception of the external world. Conversely, those that 'seduce her with a gift (δῶρον)' represent the rational elements, namely the attraction of externals, since they imply the soul's assent to what comes from without. This seems a clear reference to the passions of the soul: on the one hand, the motif of the soul's seduction by means of a gift – and, particularly, the term used for the latter (δῶρον) – appears recurrently in contexts dealing with the soul's involvement in the delusion of

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the exclusive basis of Plato. A close reading of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (201D–212B) shows that the idea might indeed proceed from this dialogue.

<sup>18</sup> *ExSoul* 131,25–26.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Symposium* 189C–193E. See KULAWIK, *Die Erzählung*, 285–88, who denounces previous scholarship's neglect of the parallel and provides an interesting commentary on both *ExSoul* and Plato's *Symposium* that claims an influence of the latter on the former (in my view unnecessarily) through Philo of Alexandria; *ibid.*, 285 note 45.

<sup>20</sup> A similar conception can be found in *AuthTeach* 25.6–9, which describes the soul's contact with the world and the subsequent appearance of desires as a 'contamination' of man's virginity: 'For if a thought of lust enters into a virgin man, he has already become contaminated'.

<sup>21</sup> *ExSoul* 127,29–31.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, SCOPELLO, *L'Exégèse*, 58–59; ROBINSON, 'The Expository Treatise', 137–38.



externals<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, according to the Platonic bipartition of the soul which was standard during this period, it is the rational part of the soul that must keep control over the affections that may seduce the irrational part with their ephemeral satisfaction.

Support for this interpretation comes from another Nag Hammadi text, the *Authoritative Teaching* (*AuthTeach*), a text in which this peculiar combination of irrational and rational elements also determines the prostitution of the soul<sup>24</sup>. Not only is the soul-body relationship seen as unnatural, but the soul's sojourn in the body, the 'house of poverty', is also conceived of as an illness<sup>25</sup>. More interesting is the way in which the world's influence on the soul is described, since it presents conspicuous similarities to *ExSoul*. To begin with, it is said that the world 'blows at her (the soul's) eyes wishing to make her blind', by means of which reality imposes itself on the senses. Irrational as it is, the only antidote to the violence of sensory perception is λόγος or 'reason', which works as a medicine in order that the soul may *really* see<sup>26</sup>. However, *AuthTeach* also refers to another kind of influence on the soul, which acts on her by means of persuasion – namely the passions. The interesting simile of the fisherman<sup>27</sup> provides an explanation of how violence and persuasion work on the soul: firstly, the adversary puts a variety of foods (τροφή) with appealing form and smell in front of us, concealing within them a hook in order to seize and subdue us by force (βία)<sup>28</sup>: 'Now all such things the adversary prepares beautifully and spreads out before the body, wishing to make the mind of the soul incline her toward one of them and overwhelm her, like a hook, drawing her by force ...'. Once this deluding view has established itself in the soul, passions arise within it as a logical consequence<sup>29</sup>: appearances continue 'deceiving her (the soul) until she conceives evil, and bears fruit of matter, and conducts herself in uncleanness, pursuing many desires, covetousness, while fleshly pleasure draws her in ignorance'.

<sup>23</sup> The combination of force and seduction appears recurrently in texts dealing with the deception of the soul in the realm of nature. In this context, 'violence' (βία) and the deceptive 'present' (δῶρον) are also frequently used to describe the effect of externalities on man. Thus, for example, *Acta Andreae* (AA) describes the devil's seduction of humanity by means of the term 'presents' (δῶρα, 18 [V<sup>o</sup> 252; 256]) and implicitly associates βίος 'life' and βία 'violence' (AA 17 [V<sup>o</sup> 231–33]). The same combination can be found in *TrimProt* (NHC XIII,1) 144,12–13; *Gosphil* (NHC II,3) 65,16–18 and, as SCOPELLO, *L'Éxegèse*, 122, points out, Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* XV,1.

<sup>24</sup> *AuthTeach* 24.6–10, a text which, in spite of its lacunary character, clearly describes the soul's dealing with the world as prostitution.

<sup>25</sup> *AuthTeach* 27.25–27.

<sup>26</sup> *AuthTeach* 28.10–22; see also 22.26–34.

<sup>27</sup> *AuthTeach* 29.3–32.1.

<sup>28</sup> *AuthTeach* 31.8–15.

<sup>29</sup> *AuthTeach* 31.17–24.



The continuation of the *ExSoul* plastically describes this never-ending search for the ephemeral fulfilment of the passions. The soul is depicted as having sexual intercourse with various adulterers, who abandon her as soon as they have used her without giving her what she expected to receive from them: 'but even when she turns her face from those adulterers, she runs to others and they compel her to live with them and to render service to them upon their bed, as if they were her masters ... and after all they abandon her and go'<sup>30</sup>.

The Biblical quotations introduced to exemplify the prostitution of the soul also show that we are moving exclusively in the realm of the soul's alienation and not in that of sexuality. After quoting Jeremiah (3:1-4) and Hosea (2:4-9), *ExSoul* introduces a quote from Ezekiel (16:23-26). The allegorical interpretation of the latter provides support for my interpretation of the sexual simile as a metaphorical description of the soul's dealings with externalities. As a matter of fact, *ExSoul* explains Ezekiel 16:26 ('You prostituted yourself to the sons of Egypt, those who are your neighbors, men great of flesh') as follows:

But what does 'the sons of Egypt, men great of flesh' mean if not the domain of the flesh and the perceptible realm and the affairs of the earth, by which the soul has become defiled here, receiving bread from them, as well as wine, oil, clothing and the other external nonsense surrounding the body—the things she thinks she needs<sup>31</sup>.

It is interesting that according to Hippolytus the Peratae applied a very similar allegorical interpretation. In it one finds again a close association of Egypt with the body:

All, however, who are ignorant, are, according to Peratic exegesis, Egyptians. And this, they assert, is the departure from Egypt, (that is,) from the body. For they suppose Egypt to be body, and that it crosses the Red Sea—that is, the water of corruption, which is Cronus—and that it reaches a place beyond the Red Sea, that is, generation; and that it comes into the wilderness, that is, that it attains a condition independent of generation<sup>32</sup>.

The simile was also used by the Naassens, who even more clearly held Egypt to be an image for the 'lower *mixis*', for the lower realm of generation, namely the realm of the body and the flesh<sup>33</sup>.

That we are dealing here with an allegorical interpretation of the Biblical passage by means of Platonic dualism seems evident, since we find it also in Philo of

<sup>30</sup> *ExSoul* 128,7–17; see also 131,13–16.

<sup>31</sup> *ExSoul* 130,20–23. The same allegorical interpretation is given by Philo, *De Migr.* 14; see below.

<sup>32</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref.* V 16,5.

<sup>33</sup> Hippolytus, *Ref.* V 7,39–40. See M. Tardieu, *Trois Mythes. Adam Éros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi* (Paris, 1974) 270–71.

Alexandria<sup>34</sup>, who interprets Genesis by means of the *Timaeus* and Exodus, applying the same opposition of the visible world and the world of ideas. According to Philo, everyone should engage in ‘taking out all the population of the soul right away from Egypt, the body, and away from its inhabitants; deeming it a most sore and heavy burden that an understanding endowed with vision should be under the pressure of the pleasures of the flesh ...’<sup>35</sup>. Through Philo this allegory came to Clement of Alexandria, who saw in Egypt ‘a symbol for the world and of error, the passions and vices’<sup>36</sup> and Origen, who according to an already widespread exegetical allegory calls Egypt οἶκος δουλείας, the ‘place of slavery’<sup>37</sup>.

However, it is the text itself that confirms the interpretation of the soul’s violation and prostitution as a reference to the influence of both sensory perception and emotions. The following NT quotations leave no doubt about this<sup>38</sup>, with *ExSoul* affirming that when the apostles command that you ‘guard yourselves against it’<sup>39</sup> they are ‘speaking not just of the prostitution of the body but especially of that of the soul’<sup>40</sup>. According to *ExSoul*, it is not the body that is held responsible for the bad conduct of the soul, but the soul for the bad conduct of the body. In a way which recalls the pre-Socratic view of Democritus, the text asserts that ‘the greatest [struggle] has to do with the prostitution of the soul. From it arises the prostitution of the body as well’<sup>41</sup>. It seems clear, consequently, that the preceding section is concerned with the symbolic violation or prostitution of the soul, namely her degradation in the world of nature due to the influence of the senses and the passions.

<sup>34</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De migratione Abrahami* 14–15; *Moses* I 18–29, on which see S.J.K. Pearce, ‘King Moses: Notes on Philo’s Portrait of Moses as an Ideal Leader in the *Life of Moses*’, in *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 57 (2004) 37–74 at 50–55; see also *Leg.* III 13–14; *Conf.* 92.

<sup>35</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *Migr.* 14; on which see S.J.K. Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo’s Representation of Egypt* (Tübingen, 2007) 120–122; see also *ibid.* 127, ‘Departure of Egypt, the body, is always associated with the moral or spiritual progress away from the body and the things of the body. Arriving in Egypt represents the soul in danger, subject to assault, imprisonment or enslavement by the bodily passions’.

<sup>36</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II 47.1; I 30.4.

<sup>37</sup> Origen, *In Ex.* VIII, 2. Numerous references in Tardieu, *Trois Mythes*, 270 note 350.

<sup>38</sup> Acts 15:20; 1 Cor 5:9–10 and Eph. 6:12.

<sup>39</sup> With reference to the following places: Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Thess 4:3; 1 Cor 6:18; 2 Cor 7:1.

<sup>40</sup> *ExSoul* 130,32–33.

<sup>41</sup> *ExSoul* 130,35–131,2; cf. Democritus B 159 D-K: ‘If the body brought a suit against it [i.e., the soul] for all the sufferings and ills it had endured throughout its whole life, and one had oneself to judge the case, one would gladly condemn the soul for having ruined certain features of the body through carelessness and made it soft through drink and brought it to rack and ruin through love of pleasure, just as if a tool or a utensil were in a bad state one would blame the person who used it carelessly’.

In spite of their different modes of action, whether by force or seduction, the influence of the ‘adulterers’ on the soul is comparable, ‘her offspring by the adulterers are dumb, blind, and sickly. They are feeble-minded’<sup>42</sup>. As stated above and in line with Diotima’s speech in Plato’s *Symposium*, the main objective of the text is to convey the idea that when the soul mixes with bad partners due to the wrong inclination, she necessarily produces bad offspring. By her contact with the world, through the influence of the body, the soul not only creates her own delusional captivity (αἰχμαλωσία), but also prolongs it due to her obliviousness to her own origin. Conversely, when mixing with good partners the result can only be positive.

### The Soul’s Salvation

Thanks to the mercy of the Father, however, not everything is lost. The last part of the narrative section explains that when the soul repents after suffering and disgrace she gains the grace of the Father:

But when the father who is above visits her and looks down upon her and sees her sighing ... and repenting of the prostitution in which she engaged, and when she begins to call upon his name ... then he will count her worthy of his mercy upon her ...<sup>43</sup>

The process of spiritual recovery enacted by the Father also begins with a sort of physical purification which counteracts the physical contamination produced by the soul’s contact with the world. The Father first moves the womb from the external to the internal domain, thus cutting off, in a manner of speaking, the possibility of new influences from the exterior. Once this has been done, he cleanses the soul of all pollution<sup>44</sup>:

So when the womb of the soul, by the will of the father, turns itself inward, it is baptized and is immediately cleansed of external pollution, which was pressed upon it, just as [garments, when] dirty, are put into the [water and] turned about until their dirt is removed and they become clean<sup>45</sup>.

I cannot agree with Bentley Layton’s interpretation of the passage in terms of the motif of the soul as a dirty garment<sup>46</sup>. Thus far *ExSoul* has maintained a clear dualistic view of the world and man, opposing the divine and earthly realms and body and soul, respectively. In such a Platonic, dualistic context, the motif of the garment is

<sup>42</sup> *ExSoul* 128,23–26.

<sup>43</sup> *ExSoul* 128,26–129,4.

<sup>44</sup> See F. WISSE, ‘On Exegeting the “Exegesis on the Soul”’, in J.E. MÉNARD, *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi. Colloque du Centre d’Histoire des religions, Strassbourg, 23–25 octobre 1974* (Leiden, 1975) 68–81 at 73–74.

<sup>45</sup> *ExSoul* 131,27–34.

<sup>46</sup> B. LAYTON, ‘The Soul as a Dirty Garment’, *Le Muséon* 91 (1978) 155–69.

strictly applied to the body and not to the soul<sup>47</sup>. In Hermetic and Gnostic contexts, the Platonic motif was adapted and applied to the soul, but this exclusively occurs in trichotomous schemes that distinguish body, soul and intellect and/or *pneuma*<sup>48</sup>. According to this well-documented view, after physical death the soul leaves the body in order to ascend to the celestial region. It is in that region that the intellect ‘puts off’ its psychic garment in order to continue its ascent to its fatherland<sup>49</sup>.

After the first step towards the soul’s recovery of her former nature (132,1), so plastically and physically described in terms of the Father turning her womb inward, the restitution of the soul’s pristine condition consists in regaining her former state of androgyny through the reunion with her other half. This reunion is presented as a marriage, the soul being the bride and the other half the bridegroom. The soul has forgotten what the bridegroom looked like at ‘the time she fell from her father’s house’, ‘[b]ut then the bridegroom, according to the father’s will, came down to her into the bridal chamber, which was prepared. And he decorated the bridal chamber’<sup>50</sup>. The soul then begins to gradually recognize her other half ‘and [once] they unite [with one another], they become a single life’<sup>51</sup>.

Both context and vocabulary seem to place us in a clear Gnostic framework<sup>52</sup>. As a matter of fact, the *Gospel of Philip*, another Nag Hammadi text, abounds with references to the opposition of ‘fleshly wedding’ and ‘spiritual wedding’<sup>53</sup> and includes numerous references to the ‘bridal chamber’<sup>54</sup>, as is also the case in the *Gospel of Thomas*<sup>55</sup>. As Marvin Meyer and Gerard Luttikhuisen have pointed out,

<sup>47</sup> See Plato, *Gorgias*, 523ff; see also Empedocles B 126 D-K.

<sup>48</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Exc. Theod.* 64 (see also 61.8; 63.1), describes souls as ἐνδύματα. See Nock-Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* I, 131 note 57. According to E.R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1963 [1933]) 307, the metaphor has an Orphic-Pythagorean origin (see the passages of Empedocles and Plato referred to in the previous note) and conceives of the body as a garment (ὑμφέσµα) which souls takes off after death. In his view, the Valentinian interpretation of Gen. 3.21 and the ‘coat of skin’ (χιτὼν δερµάτινος) as a reference to the fleshly body has the same background (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.5.5); see also *CH* VII 18 and Nock-Festugière, *ad loc.*, *Corpus* I, 82–83 note 9.

<sup>49</sup> *CH* X 16; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.7.1 and 1.21.5 (Marcosians).

<sup>50</sup> *ExSoul* 132,23–26.

<sup>51</sup> *ExSoul* 132,34–35.

<sup>52</sup> For the Gnostic interpretation of the whole section, see Scopello, *L’Exegèse*, 141.

<sup>53</sup> *GosPhil* (NHC II,3) 64.35–65.1; 76.6–9; 82.4–10.

<sup>54</sup> *GosPhil* (NHC II,3) 70.13–20.

<sup>55</sup> *GosThom* (NHC II,2) 75. Sevrin, *L’Exegèse*, 101–102, rightly points out that in *ExSoul* the ‘bridal chamber’ does not refer, as is usual in Gnostic texts, to the Pleroma, since in *ExSoul* the bridegroom descends to meet the bride. See also J.M. Sevrin, ‘Les noces spirituelles dans l’Évangile selon Philippe’, *Le Muséon* 87 (1974) 143–93 at 188–191.

however, the passage should be placed in its wider Hellenistic context<sup>56</sup>. Even Philo of Alexandria provides some precedent both for the idea of spiritual marriage and for its goal: superseding all aspects associated with femaleness to reach the higher status of male rationality<sup>57</sup>.

### The Soul's Departure from the World of Nature

In this context *ExSoul* introduces a quote from Gen 12:1, in which God commands Abraham to leave his country, his kinsmen and the house of his father, with the treatise stating that her heavenly bridegroom 'requires her to turn her face from her people and her adulterers'. After quoting Psalm 44:11-12, which already advances the notions of the soul's 'people' and 'father', *ExSoul* quotes Gen 12:1 in order to encourage people to depart from the delusion and flux of the tangible world. In the context of the treatise, however, the use of both quotations is somewhat confusing, since up to this point 'the soul's father' was the *real* father, namely God, and the 'house of her father', the divine realm. Thus, for example, *ExSoul* 132,20 refers to the soul's obliviousness to her origin with the following words: '(the soul) no longer remembers the time she fell from her father's house (ΠΗΕΙ ΜΠΕΕΙΩΤ)'. In contrast, Psalm 44:11 advises the soul to 'forget your people and your father's house'.

Due to the flagrant contradiction, the author is forced to introduce a gloss to qualify his quoting of Gen 12:1. Firstly, he associates 'her people' with the 'multitude of her adulterers' and then he states that the 'father' mentioned in Psalm 44:11-12 is not the *real* father – namely the celestial father to whom the soul actually belongs and should return to – but the 'earthly father':

For he requires her to turn her face from her people and the multitude of her adulterers, in whose midst she once was, to devote herself only to her king, her real lord, and to forget the house of the earthly father, with whom things went badly for her, but to remember her father, who is in heaven<sup>58</sup>.

However, this reference creates some new conceptual problems, since the author introduces a duality of fathers not mentioned thus far. Some scholars interpret this as a reference to the Demiurge or creator god<sup>59</sup>. In my view, however, this is hardly

<sup>56</sup> KULAWIK, *Die Erzählung*, 186.

<sup>57</sup> See Philo of Alexandria, *Quaest. in Ex.* 1.7–8; *Fuga et Inv.* 51; on which see M. MEYER, 'Making Mary Male: The Categories "Male" and "Female" in the Gospel of Thomas', *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985) 554–70 at 563–64; G.P. LUTTIKHUIZEN, *De Veelvormigheid van het vroegste Christendom* (Delft, 2002) 175 note 320.

<sup>58</sup> *ExSoul* 133,20–28.

<sup>59</sup> See SCOPELLO, *L'Exegèse*, 144; and, with hesitation, SEVRIN, *L'Exegèse*, 106, who points out that even if not openly presented as the Demiurge, the description 'earthly father' in the present dualistic



necessary. Firstly, this is the only reference in the *ExSoul* to an earthly father; and secondly, the reference can be perfectly explained on the basis of the confusing textual context created by the introduction of both quotations<sup>60</sup>.

In any case and as a confirmation of the previous gloss, *ExSoul* then introduces God's commandment to Abraham in Gen 12:1:

Come out from your country and your kinsfold  
And from your father's house<sup>61</sup>

In the dualistic context of *ExSoul* the reference to Gen 12:1, which includes three elements and not two, remains somewhat artificial. It is noteworthy that no effort is made to explain the third element, namely the 'country' referred to in the quote. In the following section we will see that Philo's use of the quotations reveals another kind of Platonism to that implied by *ExSoul*.

Once bride and bridegroom finally reunite 'she had intercourse with him, she got from him the seed that is the life-giving spirit, so that by him she bears good children'<sup>62</sup>. This is clearly the counterpoint to the beginning of the text. While her interaction with bad partners made her a slave of circumstances, either by force or by seduction, a captive in the prison of external delusion, the reunion with her other half provides her the life-giving *pneuma* that assures her of good offspring. Once rationality is fully restored to the soul, the rational part retakes complete control over the soul's conglomerate: no longer subdued by force or seduction, she is freed from the pressure of externals. The soul now moves of her own accord and is restored to her original abode. As the text expressively affirms: 'This is the ransom from captivity. This is the upward journey to heaven'<sup>63</sup>.

## 2. Philo's use of Gen 12:1 and its Philosophical Background

Even though numerous exegetes point to Philo's allegorical interpretation of Gen 12:1 as parallel to the use of the quote in *ExSoul*, a closer analysis immediately shows that the similarities only concern general issues, namely the allegorical interpretation of the 'migration'. As we will now have the opportunity to see, we face rather different

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Gnostic context implicitly calls for associations with it. See, however, KULAWIK, *Die Erzählung über die Seele*, who rightly points out that this only mention is not sufficient in order to surmise an implicit reference to the Demiurge.

<sup>60</sup> Also noted by SEVRIN, *L'Éxégèse*, 106, who rightly denounces the confusing context created by the introduction of an earthly father who is now opposed to the celestial father.

<sup>61</sup> *ExSoul* 123,29–31.

<sup>62</sup> *ExSoul* 133,34–134,2.

<sup>63</sup> *ExSoul* 134,13–15.



anthropological conceptions: whereas *ExSoul* is straightforward in its bipartite conception of the human, Philo's point of departure is somewhat more complex.

Philo in general endorses the Platonic anthropological model, namely a bipartite scheme that opposes the soul to the body, as the interior and exterior dimensions of man<sup>64</sup>. However, as usual in Hellenism, he also tends to differentiate rational and irrational parts within the soul, in this way opening up the path to a trichotomous view of man<sup>65</sup>. An example of this attitude appears at the beginning of his *De migratione Abrahami*. Philo opens the text with a quotation from Gen 12:1-3 and devotes the subsequent chapters to providing a sound explanation of the three elements involved in God's commandment to Abraham. In fact his allegorical interpretation clearly differentiates three parts in man (body, soul and logos): "Land" or "country" is a symbol of the body, "kindred" of sense-perception, "father's house" of speech (logos)<sup>66</sup>.

His tendency towards trichotomy is even clearer as the text advances, namely in chapters 9, 10 and 12-13 of *De migratione*. The commandment to Abraham is explicitly rendered there as: 'Escape ... from the prison-house, thy body' (9); 'Depart ... out of sense-perception' (10); and 'again, quit speech also' (12), which becomes even clearer in the next chapter, since the ambiguous term *logos* is substituted now by *nous*: '... when Mind (nous) begins to know itself and to hold converse with the things of mind, it will thrust away from it that part of the soul which inclines to the province of sense perception'<sup>67</sup>.

While in *De migratione* we thus observe both the internal bipartition of the soul and a reference to its rational part with the term 'Mind' (νοῦς), the function of which

<sup>64</sup> Philo, *Leg. alleg.* 3.62; *Cher.* 128; *Det. Pot. Ins.* 19; *Agric.*, 46 and 152; cf. *Abr.*, 96 etc.

<sup>65</sup> This is in line with the views developed by Plato in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*. Against the view expressed in the *Phaedo* (783b-c) that the soul is not 'composite' – and therefore not liable to destruction – the *Republic* affirms that the soul has three parts: the spirited, the irrational and the rational. As DÖRRIE (*Porphyrios*, 167–68) has pointed out, however, Middle Platonists reduced the former two to a single part in order to bring it into line with the bipartition irrational-rational in the *Timaeus*. On the bipartite structure of the soul in Middle-Platonism, see DILLON, *The Middle-Platonists*, 101–02 (Antiochus of Ascalon), 174–75 (Philo), 194 (Plutarch), 256–57 (Atticus), 263 (Severus), 290–94 (Alcinous).

<sup>66</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De migr. Abr.* 2.5–7. Even if, at first sight, the tripartite conception might seem to be forced by the three elements mentioned in Gen 12:1, the logos is nevertheless clearly seen as a differentiated part of the soul – witness his assertion, some lines below, that discursivity (*dianoia*) is the rational part of the soul as opposed to the irrational part that rules over sensation: see *De migr. Abr.* 3.4–5, αἰσθησις δὲ συγγενὲς καὶ ἀδελφόν ἐστι διανοίας, ἄλογον λογικῆς, ἐπειδὴ μιᾶς ἅμω μέρη ψυχῆς ταῦτα.

<sup>67</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De migr. Abr.* 13.4–5, ἐπειδὴν γοῦν ὁ νοῦς ἄρξεται γνωρίζειν ἑαυτὸν καὶ τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐνομιλεῖν θεωρήμασιν, ἅπαν τὸ κλινόμενον τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὸ αἰσθητὸν εἶδος ἀπόσεται. See also Philo, *Quis heres* 69–74, where he expounds his view of ecstatic experience, conceived of as the act by means of which the mind leaves itself.

is described as controlling the irrational part, *De Abrahamo* includes a reference to the capacity of Mind to detach itself both from irrationality and the body. The section in question from *De Abrahamo* also refers to Gen 12. After devoting a long section to an exposition of both the literal and allegorical interpretations of Gen 12:1, Philo concludes that according to the allegorical explanation the passage shows ‘how the mind did not remain for ever deceived nor stand rooted in the realm of sense, nor suppose that the visible world was the Almighty and Primal God, but using its reason sped upwards and turned its gaze upon the intelligible order which is superior to the visible’<sup>68</sup>.

Even though Philo does not necessarily depart from the Platonic bipartite scheme, we see a tendency to make the νοῦς increasingly independent<sup>69</sup>. Are we dealing with an Aristotelian influence on the commonly inherited Platonic view? On the basis of *Quis Heres* 277ff. one might provide a positive answer to this question. In this passage Philo attempts to provide a sound explanation of the term ‘fathers’ in the context of Gen 15:15 – in which the command is opposite to that in Gen 12:1, namely ‘Depart to thy fathers’. In this context Philo is interested in clarifying what Moses meant by ‘fathers’ in Gen 15 and in allegorically explaining the passage he offers three possible (usual?) explanations of the term ‘fathers’, which in my view have Peripatetic, Platonic and Stoic backgrounds, respectively.

To begin with he refers to the view of those who interpret ‘fathers’ as the sun, the moon and other stars, since in this conception ‘it is owing to these bodies that the nature of all the things in the world has its existence’ (280; 283). Some interpret this section as a reference to astral determinism and connect it with *De Abrahamo* 69, in which Philo attacks this view<sup>70</sup>. However, both the content and the framework of the statement also seem to point rather to an Aristotelian or Peripatetic provenance. Philo reports that according to this view the totality of the visible world owes its existence (γένεσις is the term used by Philo) to the stars or astral spheres, as Aristotle asserts in *Coming-to-be and passing-away*<sup>71</sup>. Secondly, Philo refers to the interpretation of ‘fathers’ as the archetypal forms on which earthly things are modelled. The third view deals with the Stoic conception, in which man is a combination of the four

<sup>68</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De Abr.* 62–88 at 88.

<sup>69</sup> On Aristotle, see A.P. Bos, ‘Aristotelian and Platonic Dualism in Hellenistic and Early Christian Philosophy and Gnosticism’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002) 273–291 at 276–277 and the bibliography quoted in notes 13–15.

<sup>70</sup> See M. HARL, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit. Introduction, traduction et notes* (Paris, 1966) 307, who refers to *Quaest. Ex.* II 114 and *De migr.* 97; see other similar passages in A.J. FESTUGIÈRE, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* II, 569–72; see also *De Abrahamo* 69, on which see A.P. Bos, ‘De wijsgerige theologie van Philo van Alexandrië als wegbereidster van gnostische theologieën’, *Kerk en theologie* 51 (2000) 52–63 at 57–58.

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle, *De gen. et corr.* II 10–11; see his conclusion at 338A 4–338B 7; Cf. *Physics* VIII 7–9.

elements and will thus return to them after death. The Stoic provenance of the notion is not only to be seen in the emphasis on the four elements, but also in the fact that Philo introduces the simile of grammar: as nouns and verbs ‘consist of the elements of grammar, and again are resolvable into these ultimate principles’<sup>72</sup>, so each individual returns his constituting elements to the four ground elements<sup>73</sup>.

Philo closes this survey of interpretive approaches with another reference to Aristotle, this time as support for the view that the soul is made out of the same element as the stars. Indeed, in a passage including some echoes of *De coelo* (I.1-2), Philo affirms that there is ‘a fifth substance, moving in a circle, differing by its superior quality from the four. Out of this they thought the stars and the whole of heaven had been made and deduced as a natural consequence that the human soul also was a fragment thereof’<sup>74</sup>. As a matter of fact, Philo’s knowledge and use of Aristotle is so frequent that a recent article by a Dutch scholar calls him ‘a Platonist in the image and the likeness of Aristotle’<sup>75</sup>.

### 3. Conclusions

We might conclude that there is no doubt about the Platonic background of the text. With Layton we affirm the banality of certain Platonic motifs, which were already part of the Platonic koine of the period<sup>76</sup>, such as the distinction between the heavenly and earthly realms and the fall of the soul into a body. There are other elements, however, which may not be considered to be so trivial:

To begin with, there is the reference to the soul’s vulnerability to moral and, thereby, ontological degradation. In spite of the lack of clarity regarding the cause of the fall, the text includes a version of the known Platonic *descensus animae* (127,25-26).

<sup>72</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *Quis heres* 282. On the Stoics on grammar, see M. POHLENZ, *Die Begründung der abendlandischen Sprachlehre durch die Stoa, Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* 3.6 (1939); R.H. ROBINS, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe, with Particular Reference to Modern Linguistic Doctrine* (London, 1951) and ID., *A Short History of Linguistics* (London/New York, 1990) 11–47; M. FREDE, ‘The Origins of Traditional Grammar’, in R.E. BUTTS and J. HINTIKKA (eds.), *Historical and Philosophical Dimensions of Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht, 1977) 51–79 [Reprinted in M. FREDE, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 1987) 338–359] and ‘Principles of Stoic Grammar’, in J.M. RIST (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, 1978) 27–75.

<sup>73</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *Op.* 136; 146. See B.A. PEARSON, ‘Philo and Gnosticism’, *ANRW* II 21.1 (1984) 295–343 at 338.

<sup>74</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *Quis heres* 283; on which see P. MORAUX, ‘Une nouvelle trace de l’Aristote perdu’, *Études Class.* 16 (1948) 89–91; see A.P. BOS, *The Soul and Its Instrumental Body*, 280–81.

<sup>75</sup> A.P. BOS, ‘Philo of Alexandria: a Platonist in the Image and the Likeness of Aristotle’, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998) 66–86.

<sup>76</sup> LAYTON, ‘Dirty Garment’, 163.

Central in the text is the idea that the soul produces good or bad offspring according to her partners, which might have its origin in Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*.

Clearly Platonic is the idea that the soul is numb under the pressure of externals and that when freed from external impediments she moves of her own accord (134,4-9), as Plato's *Phaedrus* affirms<sup>77</sup>.

The bipartition of the soul into rational and irrational parts.

There are also the ideas of repentance and conversion.

Finally, there is the quotation of the same passage of the *Odyssey* as Plotinus. The association, in *ExSoul*, of Calypso with the delusion of externals and of Odysseus' home with the soul's fatherland runs parallel with that of Plotinus in the *Enneads*.

Admittedly, these aspects could be labelled as being generally Platonic. Certain elements, however, may allow us to refine the analysis to understand the sort of Platonism we are dealing with. To begin with, the cosmology of the treatise is clear as to the strict dualistic scheme that lies behind its conception of the cosmos: the world is divided into two realms, namely the earthly and divine spheres. *ExSoul* reveals no trace of an intermediary realm, the astral region in which the planets or spheres are located and that was conceived of as the Demiurgical sphere in trichotomous schemes.

The anthropology precisely correlates with the bipartite cosmological scheme. The human being consists of two differentiated parts, namely body and soul. Given the negative view of the material world, we cannot expect anything other than a very negative view of the material body as well, which is conceived of as the prison of the soul. *ExSoul* divides the latter into rational and irrational parts, but the loss of its original androgynous nature seems to reflect the debilitation of the soul's intellectual faculty (its male part). As a result, the soul is trapped by the bonds of nature, and due to the rule of irrationality, the soul is now the victim both of sensory perception and the passions. However, even if dormant under the pressure of irrationality, rationality is not completely lost: the mercy of the Father and His intervention will finally ensure the recovery of her lost intellectual condition.

As in the cosmological views of the treatise, we find no trace of a third element in its anthropology. True, the appearance of the *pneuma* as the vivifying spirit that comes into the soul might seem to echo the Aristotelian conception of the extrinsic intellect that in man comes from without, as we know it from *De generatione animalium*<sup>78</sup>. However, the only passage that mentions it does not seem to consider

<sup>77</sup> See Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c 9 and *Legges* 896b 1.

<sup>78</sup> *ExSoul* 134.1-2; Aristotle, *De gen. an.* 736B 27-29.

*pneuma* as a differentiated part of the soul, but rather as the divine element by means of which God actualizes the soul's dormant rational capacity. In this sense, the basic dualistic scheme is not challenged.

The soteriology of the treatise is consistent both with the cosmological and the anthropological schemes. Consistent with its bipartite vision of the cosmos, the ascent of the soul and her resulting restoration to her original abode are automatic once the soul overcomes the earthly obstacles. There is no reference to other intermediary impediments that the soul has to deal with, such as the password owed to the archons who populate the planetary region, usually found in other Gnostic schemes. From an anthropological perspective, the recovery of the soul is automatic after the descent of her celestial half, which reactivates her rational capacity and remembrance of her origin. Consequently, there is no reference to the intellect whatsoever.

More important in assessing the kind of Platonism behind *ExSoul* is perhaps its reference to Gen 12:1 and its comparison with Philo's interpretation: while the treatise applies a clear bipartite interpretation to this verse of Genesis, Philo reveals a tripartite scheme. As already stated, the cosmological and anthropological dualism is clear in *ExSoul*'s explanation of 'the father's house' as 'the earthly father'. In a trichotomous scheme one would instead expect a closer association with the Demiurgical sphere, the region where the soul has its origin and in which it remains, while the intellect continues its ascent to the transcendent realm. This is the reason why we cannot agree with Layton's appealing hypothesis regarding the conception of the soul as a dirty garment. Given the absence in *ExSoul* of a third element that the soul would clothe, namely the intellect, we do not see how and why the soul could be considered as a 'dirty garment'. Therefore it seems preferable to see it as a simple simile that describes the soul being cleansed of pollutants. Also indicative of its bipartite world-view is that *ExSoul* only attempts to explain two elements of the Biblical passage and not three: 'your country' in Genesis 12:1 remains unexplained.

Was the allegorical interpretation of Genesis 12:1 not affected by the Platonism of *ExSoul*? Or did *ExSoul* simply adhere to the regular Christian dissociation of the celestial and the earthly fathers, God and the devil? Certain parallel uses in Origen<sup>79</sup> and Didymus the Blind<sup>80</sup> might point in the latter

<sup>79</sup> See Origen, *Selecta in Exodum* 126. After quoting Gen 12:1 and affirming that the text has two interpretations, literal and spiritual, Origen appeals to its allegorical, deeper meaning. Allegorically interpreted, Gen 12:1 appeals to man to leave behind his earthly father, namely the devil. In this context he also quotes Psalm 44:11.

<sup>80</sup> Didymus the Blind, *In Zachariam* II, 148, in which Didymus follows Origen, who associates the earthly father with the devil. After defending widows and orphans from general opprobrium by means of several Biblical quotations, Didymus resorts to the spiritual sense (κατὰ θεωρίαν). In his



direction<sup>81</sup>. Or are we simply dealing with different kinds of Platonism? After the exhaustive analysis of the world-view behind the treatise, however, it seems clear that *ExSoul*'s allegorical interpretation is consistent with the bipartite scheme that governs its cosmology, anthropology, psychology and soteriology. We might therefore conclude that *ExSoul* was influenced by a kind of Platonism that was different to that of Philo. Whereas the latter interprets the *passus* according to a tripartite view of man current in Middle-Platonic contexts under the influence of the Peripatos, *ExSoul* remained faithful to traditional Platonism, free of Aristotelian influences<sup>82</sup>. Behind *ExSoul* we might very well have a kind of purist Platonism which, as documented by Atticus, saw Aristotelian influence as a betrayal of Plato's heritage.

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view, a widow has in a certain way rejected her 'bad husband, who is no other than the devil'; with regard to an orphan, the father who procreated him in sin no longer exists. The reference to Gen 12:1 and the quotation of Psalm 44:11 in the present context clearly show that in Didymus' view they symbolize the rejection of the earthly realm and father.

<sup>81</sup> See M. SCOPELLO, 'Les "Testimonia" dans le traité de "L'exégèse de l'âme" (Nag Hammadi, II, 6)', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 191 (1977) 159–71, for the view that these similarities might indicate the existence of a florilegium including these references.

<sup>82</sup> On which see P. MERLAN, 'The Later Academy and Platonism', in A.H. ARMSTRONG (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1970) 53–83.